



Advanced Higher Modern Studies
Approved List of Dissertations

Revised, August 2008

Advanced Higher Modern Studies Dissertation Titles

These titles have been selected from submissions in the first few years of the new course.

Some titles in this document may go out of date quite quickly and more up-to-date ideas may be found by adapting these, or past paper questions. Centres are still at liberty to devise further titles. They may submit these for approval in the normal way by 1 November. This list will be updated as necessary.

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Study Theme 1: Comparative Politics and Research Methods

Titles in this theme may be amended to cover Scotland, the UK, and/or the USA.

Context A: Political Parties

- ◆ Socialism is no longer part of the New Labour ideology.
- ◆ Few differences remain between 'New Labour' and the Conservative Party.
- ◆ All major parties have divisions within and between them.
- ◆ Occupation of the middle ground makes the Liberal Democrats unelectable.
- ◆ Political parties are increasingly dominated by their leaders.
- ◆ There are increasing similarities between the American and British Party systems.

Context B: Electoral Systems

- ◆ In the UK and the USA voting behaviour is influenced more by the media's constant scrutiny of politicians' morals than by party policies and ideologies.
- ◆ Despite arguments to the contrary, newspapers exercise a significant influence on voting behaviour in the UK.
- ◆ It is the electoral systems themselves, not the political parties, which are to blame for low turnouts in the UK and the USA.
- ◆ Women have more of an impact on American politics than they have on UK politics.
- ◆ Social class is no longer important when explaining voting behaviour.
- ◆ The personality and image of the party leader is now the decisive factor in achieving electoral success in the United Kingdom.
- ◆ Race and religion are becoming increasingly important factors influencing voting behaviour.
- ◆ Proportional Representation ensures a more inclusive, democratic and effective outcome than FPTP.

Context C: Decision-making in Central and Devolved/State Government

- ◆ The mass media have more influence on executives than the majority of elected representatives.

- ◆ Legislation proposed by the UK Prime Minister has a greater likelihood of becoming law than that which is proposed by an American President.
- ◆ In the USA and UK, there has been a reduction in the effectiveness of the checks on central government.
- ◆ British Prime Ministers are now presidents in all but name.

Context D: The Politics of Influence

- ◆ Pressure groups seldom have any significant influence on government decision-making in the UK/USA/Scotland.
- ◆ Pressure groups are rarely effective in the short term.
- ◆ The mass media has begun to dominate the decision making processes within central government.
- ◆ Central Government ignores the democratic process in its attempts to stifle pressure groups.

Study Theme 2: Law and Order and Research Methods

Context A: Rights and Responsibilities in relation to Law and Order in the UK

- ◆ The incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into the Scottish Legal System may have significant consequences, which may benefit society in Scotland.
- ◆ Identity cards are an infringement of civil liberties.
- ◆ The UK government has failed to enforce the rights of asylum seekers.
- ◆ The European Convention on Human Rights has undermined the legal system in the UK.
- ◆ Recent legislation appears to have reduced the human rights of people in the UK.
- ◆ People are interested in rights and not responsibilities.
- ◆ The war on terror necessitates a restriction of individual liberty.
- ◆ Only those who attempt to disrupt the state should fear the use of new technology by the police and other government agencies.

Context B: The Cause and Effects of Crime in the UK

- ◆ Criminals are born that way.
- ◆ Working class people are more likely to commit crime.
- ◆ Statistics on reported crimes are inherently unreliable.
- ◆ Crime does not take place in middle class areas.
- ◆ Why has there been an increase in drug related crime?
- ◆ How strong is the economic impact of crime on society?
- ◆ The criminal justice system is not progressing in the fight against bigotry.
- ◆ Racism is not only surviving but thriving in Scotland today.
- ◆ Social deprivation and crime are inextricably linked.

Context C: Responses to Crime in the UK

- ◆ The creation of a fully comprehensive national database is the best way to deal with crime in the UK.
- ◆ The 'Not Proven' verdict is out of date and in a modern Scottish society should no longer be an option for juries.
- ◆ Arming the police will act as a deterrent to crime.
- ◆ Scottish legislation relating to stalking and harassment should be reformed.
- ◆ Recent changes in UK policing have transformed the police into a force fit for the twenty first century.
- ◆ Racism is not institutionalised in Scottish police forces.
- ◆ Drug courts are the most effective method of dealing with drug related crime.
- ◆ The political parties' policies on law and order are nothing more than 'knee jerk' reactions to public concerns.
- ◆ The Children's Hearing System is failing both the Scottish public and young people.
- ◆ New technology is more likely to hinder than help in the fight against crime.
- ◆ Restorative justice – the future model for punishment and rehabilitation or just another passing fad?
- ◆ 'New Labour' is the natural party of law and order.
- ◆ Law and order policies of the main political parties are identical.
- ◆ How successful are the Scottish Prison Services in recruiting, retraining and promoting ethnic minority officers?
- ◆ Parents should be punished for crimes committed by their children.
- ◆ Is locking up more criminals for longer the best way to reduce crime?

Context D: Penal Systems in the UK

- ◆ There are no effective alternatives to prison.
- ◆ Is capital punishment in the USA justifiable retribution?
- ◆ Privately run prisons will not solve the problems that exist in publicly run prisons.
- ◆ Ethnic minorities are more likely to be given custodial sentences.
- ◆ Are drug dependent offenders being given the opportunity to reform?
- ◆ The penal system is ineffectual in dealing with crime.
- ◆ The prison system fails to meet the needs of women.

- ◆ The drug culture in Scottish prisons has grown out of hand.
- ◆ Are prisons responsible for the high recidivism rates?
- ◆ Does the punishment fit the crime?

Study Theme 3: The European Union and Research Methods

Context A: Political Relations

- ◆ The Scottish Parliament is powerless with regards to the European Union Fisheries Policy.
- ◆ Devolved Government has limited Scotland's influence within the European Union.
- ◆ Until the UK can deal with the issue of sovereignty, it will make little progress in Europe.
- ◆ The 'EU' constitution should be abandoned.
- ◆ UK political parties have failed to embrace the European Union.

Context B: Representation and Participation in the European Parliament

- ◆ The Electoral Process for the European Union has failed to deliver democracy.
- ◆ Corruption within the European Parliament has led to mistrust by the European electorate.
- ◆ Enlargement has led to an unworkable decision making process in the European Union.
- ◆ The European Parliament is a waste of money.
- ◆ UK political party policies have led to UK electorate disillusionment with the European Parliament.

Context C: The European Union and its International Involvement

- ◆ NATO and the European Union cannot co-exist
- ◆ The European Union deserves the term 'Superpower'
- ◆ The Euro continues to hamper the development of the European Union
- ◆ European Union energy policies have failed to deliver
- ◆ New member countries have greatly added to the economic problems faced by the European Union

Context D: Social Developments in the European Union with reference to the UK and the EU

- ◆ Human Rights legislation has undermined the UK legal system

- ◆ EU Health and Safety directives have seriously damaged UK industry
- ◆ Gender issues are still widespread in the European Union
- ◆ The European Union needs to do more to influence those who do not introduce its directives.
- ◆ The European Union is drowning in a sea of Directives.